

The first time I rode up West Alpine... 1970?



The original plan was to do the usual Pescadero/Tunitas loop, and we were pretty excited about being able to do it without a base layer or leg warmers. Or, in my case, electrically-heated gloves. We even left late enough to make sure any lingering fog at the coast had a chance to burn off. Seemed like a good plan. If we were feeling really good (not likely), we could even try reverse Pescadero with West Alpine at the end!

Heading up Old LaHonda, past the sign advising cyclists to choose a different route, I gave Kevin permission to fly if he wanted to, but he held back, thinking the new stop light near the top would wreck his time anyway. I told him that it was a sure thing there was a new Old LaHonda segment that ended just prior to the stop sign, but he wasn't going to kill himself today, and in fact did arrive at the stop sign a few minutes before me. A 25-something time for me, better than recent tries, but a far cry from my 21 minute times of just a few years ago.

Heading down the other side, we stopped at the traditional view point (across from the skull carvings in the rock) and... darn... FOG. Quite a bit of it, and we had our minds set on warmer temps. What do do. Kevin has a thing, a really strong thing, for West Alpine, so we built a ride around that, then south on Skyline, down 9/Redwood Gulch and back.

Since we weren't heading to any store at the coast, we stopped at the store in LaHonda (which now has signs asking cyclists to remove their cleats and not lean bikes against the building) and picked up a couple of poppyseed muffins and snickers. Good thing, because, that was our only stop for food on the ride. We stopped to eat at the LaHonda duck pond, which this time had more frogs and turtles than ducks.

The spot on West Alpine in the picture...I still remember riding up that with Rob Kreisle, probably in the summer between 5th & 6th grades, maybe 6th & 7th. We both had Schwinn Varsity 10-speeds (back when 10-speeds meant just 5 cogs in the back, not 10 like you'd find today), and fueled ourselves with those monstrous 2-liter bottles of Coke, which I carried on a rack.

The actual ride we did back then entailed riding all the way down into Portola State Park, and I remember not wanting to go down too fast, thinking that would somehow make it tougher coming back up. Since then, I've only ridden all the way down into, and back up out of there (the park) a few times. The first few miles climbing back out of the park and incredibly steep, and you can't make a loop out of it unless you want to ride 5 or 6 miles on dirt roads.

I remember we'd (Rob and I) take trips to the US Geological Survey in Menlo Park, to buy maps that would show us where we might want to ride and what to expect. Our overview map, giving us ideas of what the world around us would be like, was the AAA Bay & River map. We didn't even know about Old LaHonda, since it appeared as an almost invisible line on the map, so we got up to Skyline using 84.

OK, back to modern times. This was a tougher ride than most because heading south on Skyline always seems to take something out of you. And it didn't help when, heading under 280 on Foothill, Kevin blew his rear tire when he hit an impossible-to-see-in-the-dark pothole. That brought out angry, wanting to get home fast Kevin, which meant not stopping at the nearby Peet's for coffee and food. A bit worried I'd make it back without that stop, but I survived.